Using SSL with mIRC

mIRC supports secure server connections with SSL using the OpenSSL library. To use SSL with mIRC you will need to download and install the OpenSSL library.

Where can I download the OpenSSL library?

An installer for OpenSSL 0.9.8y, which we recommend for compatibility with most applications, can be found here: openssl-0.9.8y-setup.exe

Alternatively, you can download the newer version of OpenSSL, OpenSSL 1.0.1g, from here: openssl-1.0.1g-setup.exe

If you are using an older version of Windows, you may also need to install the Visual C++ 2008 redistributables from here.

These versions of the OpenSSL library were created using a default compilation of the OpenSSL source files from the OpenSSL website and as such may or may not be suitable for your particular needs.

Where do I install the OpenSSL library?

You will need to install it either in the mIRC folder (typically C:\Program Files\mIRC) or in the Windows System folder (typically C:\Windows\System32).

If you install it in the mIRC folder, OpenSSL will be usable only by mIRC.

If you install it in the Windows System folder, OpenSSL will be usable by all applications.

What do I do next?

You can now run mIRC and it should find and use the OpenSSL library automatically. To confirm whether mIRC has loaded the OpenSSL library, you can open the Options dialog and look in the Connect/Options section to see if the "SSL" button is enabled.

You can also check the $sslready identifier to determine whether mIRC has loaded the OpenSSL library successfully.

To initiate a secure connection to an SSL capable server, you can use the /server -e switch, or prefix the port number with a plus sign, eg. +7001. Once connected, the variable $ssl can be used to determine whether the current connection is secure.

Which servers support SSL connections?

If an IRC network or server supports SSL connections they will normally advertise this fact in the MOTD that you see when you first connect to the server. You can look at the MOTD of your usual network or server to see if they support SSL connections. That said, here are few SSL-capable servers that you can try out:

eu.geekshed.net:+6697
irc.dal.net:+6697
irc.distributed.net:+994
irc.freenode.net:+7000
irc.indymedia.org:+6697
irc.link-net.org:+7000
irc.oftc.net:+6697
irc.rizon.net:+6697
irc.theonering.net:+6697
ssl.efnet.org:+9999

When connecting to these servers you will not notice any difference from connecting to a normal server. You may see a notice such as:

**** You are connected to this server with TLSv1-AES256-SHA-256bits*

And if you perform a /whois on yourself you should see a note indicating that you are using a secure connection.

Why would I need a secure connection?

mIRC is used by many organizations, from corporate to governmental, that need to communicate over secure connections. Various educational organizations that provide online teaching also require communications that are secure for privacy reasons. Apart from that, many individuals around the world also depend on secure communications, whether for personal, political, business, or other reasons. Whether you need to use secure communications depends on your own personal circumstances. If it's not something that you think you need then you probably don't.

Important issues to note

Information you exchange with an IRC server over a secure connection cannot be viewed or modified by others. However, be aware that traffic *between* public servers on a network is exchanged over plain, unencrypted lines. This means that if you want to be sure that your communication is secure, you and the person with whom you want to communicate securely should *both* connect to the same SSL-capable server, and communicate via a query window. If talking on a channel, be aware that everyone on the channel must be on a secure connection. If one person on the channel is not on a secure connection, your communications on that channel will not be secure.

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